

Wisconsin Veterans Museum
Research Center

Transcript of an
Oral History Interview with
FRANK J. REMINGTON
Pilot, Army Air Corps, WWII
1995

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Remington, Frank J., (1922-1996). Oral History Interview, 1995.

User Copy: 2 sound cassettes (75 min.), analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Master Copy: 1 sound cassette (75 min.), analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Abstract

Remington, a Madison, Wis. veteran, discusses his World War II service as a pilot with the Army Air Corps stationed in Myitkyina (Burma) “flying the hump” to China. A student at the University of Wisconsin-Madison prior to the war, Remington talks about the atmosphere on campus and the reasons for student enlistment. He details training at Kessler Field (Mississippi), pre-flight training at Montgomery (Alabama), his impressions of southern racism, and the differences between single and double engine airplanes. After flying overseas and landing in India, he comments on his impressions of India, sightseeing, health concerns, and Army information about Indian customs. Stationed at Myitkyina (Burma) he mentions ethnic strife, delivering gas to Kung-Ming (China), interactions with the Chinese Army, and tensions between the Nationalist Chinese and American troops. He details military life including living in tents, lack of recreation activities at the remote base, watching movies, receiving mail, and heavy drinking. Remington tells several anecdotes about his service including falling asleep while flying, having all the cigarettes stolen from base, and his co-pilots first experience drinking alcohol. Upon discharge, Remington returned to school at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and discusses life at Badger Village, the crowding of campus with veterans, and the community developed by Army wives while their husbands attended college on the GI Bill. He touches upon being called to active duty during the Korean War, transfer to the Judge Advocate General Corps, and his feelings about the Vietnam War.

Biographical Sketch

Remington, originally of New York, was a pilot with the Army Air Corps during World War II. Stationed in Burma, he flew many missions into China.

Interviewed by Mark Van Ells, 1995.

Transcribed by Nathan King, 2003.

Transcription edited by Abigail Miller, 2003.

Interview Transcript

Mark: OK, today's date is February the 9th, 1995. This is Mark Van Ells, archivist, Wisconsin Veterans Museum. I'm doing an oral history interview this morning with Mr. Frank J. Remington, a veteran of the China – Burma – India Theater in World War II. Good morning, how you doing?

Remington: OK.

Mark: Good. Let's start from the top, here. Perhaps you could tell me where you were born and a little bit about your upbringing, and what you were doing before the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941?

Remington: Alright, I was born in 1922, and was born in Skenektedy, New York.

Mark: Is your family from New York State?

Remington: My family was originally from New York State, and I grew up most of my life in Skenektedy, and the area of New York state that is immediately adjacent to Vermont.

Mark: Mm-hmm. You grew up in the depression generation.

Remington: Correct.

Mark: Did this impact on you and your family in any significant way?

Remington: Well, to some extent. My father worked for the General Electric company, which at that point was the largest employer in Skenektedy in those days, and was affected but not as greatly as some other people were by the Depression. And he was not in a situation of making a great deal of money, but we were very fortunate that when I was young, he made enough money that we could survive and did not feel particularly disadvantaged.

Mark: Where did you go to school? I noticed on your pre-war occupation here it says "Student."

Remington: Yes, I started school here at Wisconsin in 1940.

Mark: An undergraduate?

Remington: In undergraduate school.

Mark: That's when you first came to Wisconsin?

Remington: That's when I first came to Wisconsin.

Mark: What made you choose UW?

Remington: Well, I tell the story – it's an accurate story – of having great aspirations to apply to a large number of schools starting with Wisconsin because the university had a very good reputation in

the East. In upstate New York, the High School teachers I had were very high on Wisconsin as being one of the great universities, and I agree, which I think it clearly is, but my intention was to apply to a large number of places. I was working at that time for the General Electric Company in the factory, pre-World War II, working on anti-aircraft searchlights and varied tasks which needed limited ability but working long hours as everybody was in that immediately pre-World War 2 time. And for that reason, and some other things, despite my best intentions, I applied to Wisconsin and was, of course, accepted. I applied to the University of Virginia but was told that unless one was from Virginia distinguished background, that the University of Virginia was not really a comfortable place to be, and I clearly didn't have any distinguished Virginia background so I sort of put that one on the back burner. And I had another application to the University of Michigan that I was going to fill out, but I spilled ink on that, so that left Wisconsin with the only one. And I didn't get around to applying anywhere else and they, having accepted me, came time I went on a train and came out to Madison.

- Mark: I just want to backtrack one second. This is kind of an interesting point. You were working for G.E. and your father worked for G.E. I'm interested to know how the economy of where you were growing up – and your work in G.E. – you mentioned the searchlights and these kinds of things. Did you notice an increase in industrial war-related output at the time?
- Remington: Yeah, there was no question that G.E. so far as I know did not make searchlights of any kind until the late 1930s and early 1940s, and that was an entirely new endeavor on the part of General Electric. In fact, when I started, they were making very limited sort of prototypes, and during the period that I was there, moved into more quantitative production – producing more searchlights. Actually we had a situation where the searchlight needed to be inspected – particularly the reflector – and if it passed inspection, it went to the United States Army, or to Great Britain. If it flunked, it went to France. So, you have some indication of the relative status of those countries in those days. That was the policy at that time.
- Mark: Historians will look back and claim that it was the outbreak of war in Europe and the [unintelligible] and these kinds of things that helped end the depression.
- Remington: Oh, I don't think there's any question about that. I'm not particularly expert with respect to that, but certainly my observations working at G.E., working 40 hours a week for 60 cents an hour originally, and then was asked to move to 60 and later 70 and 80 hours a week. Those, I say, my tasks were pretty menial in terms of operating a drill press with repetitive sort of activity. But the fact that I went from 40 hours to 80 hours indicates, I think, the increased emphasis on production. And obviously war on the question of amount of income we were paid – time and a half – which means that I was getting 90 cents an hour for the 40 hours of overtime. So it increased the income very considerably. And I think there were a lot of people in the same position I was in.
- Mark: Sure. OK. Now we'll go back to UW, or to come to UW, I guess is where we were. You were an undergraduate. Your major was?

Remington: I came out here in 1940 and was in what was called, and I think still called Letters & Science, and had a very general sort of liberal arts curriculum, and had no particular objective at that time. It was left to post-service time to really decide what I wanted to do.

Mark: I see. So when Pearl Harbor was attacked you were on campus.

Remington: I was on campus, here.

Mark: Do you recall, for anecdotal purposes, do you recall when you learned of the attack and your reaction to it? Especially as a young, military-aged man, do you remember what you thought?

Remington: Yeah, I remember. I was living at that time in the dormitories out on the west side of the campus, and heard about the Pearl Harbor over the radio, as I recall, and it was obvious to everyone that it had major implications for all of us who were on campus, and students. Obviously at that time, which was 1941, there had been a lot of young people already affected. Wisconsin people in particular. I had a brother-in-law – person who subsequently became my brother-in-law – who was on Corregidor and although I don't have the dates clearly in mind, obviously, that immediately followed, as I recall, Pearl Harbor, and was obviously a major – and knew him at the time, and knew the person who subsequently became my wife some time later. So the consequences were very apparent through that association and also through, I think, everybody who was on campus, recognizing that it was just a matter of when they entered the service.

Mark: Having grown up after the Vietnam War, people in my generation would tend to associate students with trying to avoid the service, trying to get out of it. But the World War II generation, they seem to lie to the draft boards to get *in* to the service. I'm wondering if you can explain that sort of – is it *enthusiasm* to get into the military? Was it a sense of duty?

Remington: I don't know that it was enthusiasm in the sense that given one's desire, one would have hoped there might not have been German invasion of Poland, and the Pearl Harbor attack, and that all would have been peaceful. I think most people would have been enthusiastic about that alternative, rather than what occurred. But it, having occurred, I think that everybody felt a desire to participate and, as you indicate, make efforts to qualify. In my own situation I was lighter than – as tall as I am now, but a great deal lighter – and feared that I might not make the minimum weight for the Air Force for my height, so went on a diet of eating everything that I could get my hands on, particularly things that were supposedly good for adding weight in order to ensure that I would qualify.

Mark: When did you eventually go into the service? Did you wait until the semester was over, or?

Remington: Well, no. Well, yes. What happened was that I applied – there was on campus, there were people, I remember a young member of the Philosophy department particularly – unfortunately his name I have now forgotten – who was sort of an advisor to students with regard to the matters – and there were recruiters on campus indicating what the alternatives were, including the – what was then the Army Air Force, and suggesting how to go about signing up, in effect. So, although I've forgotten the details, I remember going through that process, and decided that the best way of doing it, for reasons that I don't now fully understand, was the spring semester of 1942 and that to

go to Albany, New York and there apply. Yeah, I was given that advice for some reason, but I don't really remember now why it was there rather than doing that in Madison. There was some suggestion of that sort. And then, as was the policy in the Air Force at that time, they – one was put on a list of some kind and told, "You'll hear from us," and they indicated that there would be some delay. I take it the training facilities were such that the number of people taken were determined by the ability to handle that, and probably an indication, or another manifestation of what you mentioned, that is the, if not enthusiasm, the willingness to sign up indicated that they had resulted in their having more people sign up than they could take at that time. And so it turned out that it was after that some six to eight months later when I got the notice to report to Chicago, so it indicated my Madison, Wisconsin location was determined in terms of where I reported, and reported to Chicago and was transported to Kessler Field, Mississippi and I was to start.

Mark: OK. In all of the interviews that I've done, I've found that applying to get into the Air Force was extremely popular. I want to hear you comment on why you wanted to join the Air Force as opposed to the other kinds of services.

Remington: Uh, that's a good question [chuckles] and I don't know that I've got a got answer too. I suppose there was some kind of attraction by the idea of flying. Unlike today, the Air Force was part of the Army, so I don't think it was so much of the nature of that service as opposed to Army and Navy which many would have said was preferable to a lot of people. And of course, there was the 12 programs on campus here. So, it is a fair question to which I don't really have a good answer – and there were no Air Force programs that I recall – Army Air Force programs on campus - why one would not have applied to the Navy. Most, for example, as you perhaps know from your interviews of the Wisconsin athletes at that time – football players in particular – joined the 12 or the 6 or whatever the number was program.

Mark: If I can get this right, V-12 is the Navy program –

Remington: Right.

Mark: And the Army had ASTP?

Remington: OK. But not Air Force –

Mark: Something that I really should do some research on.

Remington: And, for example, they just had a reunion of the V-12 people that signed up and went to Michigan. They had their 55th year and Elroy Hersch and Hank Roshanski and Bob Brenebaum and all kinds of people from Wisconsin went over to Ann Arbor for the reunion. So, that segment of the student population, the student athletes, with perhaps an exception or so, all went into Navy Marine. Schreiber was killed – was an All-American – was killed in Okinawa. And so why Army Air Force rather than Navy or Marine, I just don't have any recollection.

Mark: OK. I'd like to go over the induction process, if I could. I assume you had to take some tests –

Remington: Yes.

Mark: - somewhere along the line. Did you do that actually before you were inducted?

Remington: I did that in Albany, New York, where you went through a medical exam. And, by and large, I think it was probably a relatively routine medical exam – with, I'm sure, more emphasis on vision, and perhaps on a few other things – blood pressure and a few things of that kind – but otherwise it didn't seem distinguishable from what I observed to be most military physicals for induction purposes.

Mark: Any sort of written aptitude tests? True-False?

Remington: Those things came later where – as a third step out at Kessler Field – then one other step. Everybody went to Nashville, Tennessee, at least if you were in the Southeast Training Division, and there was a classification set. And there were all kinds of tests – written, coordination tests, round pegs in square holes, and machines that today would be fairly simple for young people but then were quite modern, where you were required to react to things that flashed on the screen. And I think more detailed vision tests, and more emphasis on depth perception and a whole variety of things. In fact, I think the classification lasted four weeks or so, and although there was a fair amount of downtime there, there was also a fair amount of activity both in the medical field – so as I say, endless coordination tests, the ability to do things with your hands, and eye-hand coordination and other things of that kind.

Mark: Now, this was in Nashville?

Remington: Nashville.

Mark: This was after you had been in Kessler for a while?

Remington: It was after I had been in Kessler for two months, which is basic training.

Mark: Now, this is the haircut and the drill sergeant and all those kind of –

Remington: Right, marching and kitchen duty, KP, and I would think relatively indistinguishable from what anybody else going in the army got. I think the basic training was fairly uniform. And I think, primarily because there was this sort of funnel effect with more people coming than could be handled by the Air Force at the moment, the next step from basic training was, in my case, Elon College, North Carolina. And almost everybody – I think everybody, but certainly everybody I knew – went to a college campus. And I went there and spent, however, only about thirty days, and there took classes on weather, and had a very limited amount of flight training in Piper Cubs, and a fair amount of marching and obviously more physical exams on a continuing basis. So that was the next step. And then to pre-flight, which was in Montgomery, Alabama.

Mark: Was this your first time in the South?

Remington: Yeah.

Mark: Do you recall any particular impressions of the region?

Remington: Well –

Mark: Was it any more distinct than it is today? Was there any sort of tension being the Yankee down south?

Remington: Yeah, we never got off the base in Kessler Field. So that wasn't a – the Air Force base could have been anywhere. It turned out, it was in Biloxi, Mississippi, but I never saw the ocean, never saw Biloxi, haven't seen Biloxi, I think, to this day. And Elon College is extremely small community, very small college in North Carolina, and we may have had a little time off on the weekend, but there was nowhere to go, and there was really nothing there. Nashville was more like Kessler Field. We were there for a relatively short period of time, and as I recall, never got to downtown Nashville. I may have been wrong about that, but there was very, very limited contact. In Montgomery, Alabama, pre-flight, a little bit more. Ability to see Alabama, and it obviously was greatly different from Wisconsin or upstate New York was, and it was at a time where Black people were required to ride in the back of the buses, and all the indications of separatism and discrimination were quite apparent.

Mark: Now, as a northerner, and you had been to college, you were aware this existed in the south. Did you still find it shocking when you went down there? Did you just accept it at the time?

Remington: I don't know whether it was accepted. I think the typical difficulty that people had with it was that they really didn't know how to act as a Southerner – that is, those people that I knew went and sat in the back of the bus, if there were seats there, and the ground and they'll even stand up front when you've got seats in the back, obviously creating consternation on the part of other people on the bus sometimes – sometimes the bus driver – and there was, you know, some of that. It didn't, obviously, escalate to a Rosa Parks crisis, but I think that the tension was obviously there where there was no tradition for this kind of separation of people. I, myself, had grown up in an ethnically diverse community where, I think with one other exception, all the friends I had – and I had many – had parents who did not speak English. We were an industrial Eastern community, and ranged far and wide at a time when all of the emphasis was what we would now call integration, where all of the parents wanted their children speaking English and frowned on their speaking the language of their parents because, in the view that the objective clear to everybody was to become assimilated. And obviously, that has changed to some extent today, although at that time the upper state New York, or the Northeast generally did not have a large Black population, and therefore was not any problem. Such Black population as there was sort of joined in the assimilation, although it obviously presented more than the language barrier, and, but was viewed in terms of high school and school in a way that differed radically from the South.

Mark: What about your colleagues in your training program? This is a mix of people from all different parts of the country. Did people get along? Were there tensions between the Northerners and Southerners, immigrants and non-immigrants, Easterners and Westerners?

Remington: No, I think everybody got along. It was evident that people from the South were still fighting the Civil War and that always came as a kind of a surprise to people who thought that the Civil War had been over for almost a hundred years at that time, and their find that it was still going on was, of course, kind of odd. And yet, there were among Southerners, still reflected characteristics that even persist today – a desire to display the Confederate flag, a feeling that the wrong side lost, and things of that kind. But they did not – these were just differences that arose, in my experience, at least, in casual conversation and didn't escalate to anything of particular significance.

Mark: I see. So people pretty much did blend together, get along?

Remington: Yeah, the, again, depending on what time the pre-flight was still in the era of the harassment situation, which was characteristic, I think, of the military academies where the nature of the program – of course, it was a two month program. The first month you were under the supervision of upperclassmen who gave high priority to making life, if not miserable, at least as difficult as they could. You had the square meals – that is, you had to bring the food up eye level, or mouth level and across. Often had to sleep at parade rest, which is a particularly uncomfortable position. Had to never look up, but look down and pick up any cigarette butts or anything on the ground, and a whole variety of things that disappeared some months after that policy was changed. And I guess you see some evidence of it at West Point, some other places, on occasion, where there is some indication of some harassment of incoming students by upperclassmen, but I think that's not to the degree. So if you were, what in effect is an underclassman subject to this, I suppose it did have the effect of creating a mutual enemy of upperclassmen, and tended to make you more likely to get along with each other as a sort of mildly oppressive [oppressed] class of citizens.

Mark: Which is perhaps the point after all.

Remington: That may have been the point. I never understood what the point was, but that may have been it.

Mark: OK. If we could talk about pre-flight. And then where'd you go after that?

Remington: In pre-flight – then we went to the flight training and to basic. There are three phases of flight training: basic, intermediate, and advanced. And basic training was at McBride, Missouri, which was just across the Mississippi River from Chester, Illinois, and we flew Steermen there – two-winged, open cockpit airplane that was very well known at that time, very common stunt plane that you could do a lot of things with. And the chief objective there was to solo, and actually McBride, quite interestingly, was run on a contract basis by a group out of Madison, who had run flight school here in Madison out at what is now Truax Field, I think. And at least in that situation, there was a contract with civilians who had flying experience to come and to teach Air Force people there, the Army Air Force people how to fly Steermen. And that was a two month experience with greatest emphasis on the flying and understanding things that you need to understand in order to fly a basic airplane.

Mark: The basic aerodynamics and how the plane responds –

Remington: Right.

Mark: When you finally went overseas, what kind of plane did you fly?

Remington: I flew a C-47, which is the military counterpart to the civilian DC-3.

Mark: And when in your training did you learn that that was what you were going to be flying?

Remington: Well, the key separation point was basic. Everybody went into intermediate, which was a T-6, as I recall, although I may have the wrong number – single engine airplane with more complicated flight characteristics than the Steerman. It was a more – newer airplane – a larger airplane – and one which had greater instrumentation, which Steerman had little, if any. It was used for contact flying, was not suitable for instrument flying. And intermediate was not a really well equipped instrument – but moved into night flying and some other things which you didn't do in basic. At that point, when you went to advanced, then the group was separated into those who went into single-engine advanced, and those who went into twin-engine. And I went into twin-engine advanced at Stuttgart, Arkansas, which consisted of learning to fly an AT-10 which was a small – looked like one of the older Beechcraft airplanes – it may have been made by Beechcraft, I don't remember. And the twin-engine training was in the Beechcraft – er, the AT-10.

Mark: Now, by this time, are you distinguished from those who would fly bombers?

Remington: No, they were twin engine. All multi-engine, you went through twin engine. They were distinguished from the fighter pilot, single engine, P-38, P-51, P-40, those were the major single-engine airplanes. But, going into twin engine, it opened a whole range of things: B-17, B-24, B-29. In the cargo area, the C-47, the C-46, the C-54 and some other – the B-25, the Doolittle, that was a twin-engine airplane. The A-26 was a twin engine airplane. And there were others.

Mark: Now, when you're flying, what's the difference between a single engine and a double engine? Do they handle differently, or?

Remington: Yeah, they handle differently, and you've got different procedures. Losing an engine in a single-engine, you're not going anywhere further. In the twin engine, you can have single engine – flying on a single engine. Some planes do that better than others. And you tended to move into instrument flying. Much more flying in bad weather where traditionally the single engine planes flew only in contact – under contact conditions – did not fly, were not equipped, really, to fly in bad weather.

Mark: From what I've heard, and what I've read, training could sometimes be very dangerous for pilots. Did you have any close calls, in terms of accidents or any of these kinds of things?

Remington: Well, later, when I was overseas, there were some things that I guess one could call close calls, but in training, I don't remember any. I was there, as I say, for two months, graduated in March of 1944, and my next assignments was to be an instructor in twin-engine in Stuttgart, and so I probably had – I've got the flight records here – I probably had 600 hours in the AT-10, which is a fair amount of time, and obviously got to know that airplane very well.

- Mark: OK. And you instructed for how long, did you say?
- Remington: Graduated in March and was transferred to St. Joseph, Missouri in October to take training in the C-47. So, March, October, it was roughly six months.
- Mark: You sure did spend a lot of time traveling around the states. When did you finally get overseas?
- Remington: Well, when I actually – in the fall I had gotten married in the spring of 1944 after graduating from flight training and being commissioned and getting pilot's wings, and lived off the base in Stuttgart when I was an instructor. And then, what'd I say, was reassigned to St. Joseph, Missouri to be checked out in the C-47, and was at St. Joseph for October, November, December, about three months, and flew during that time, basically an airline from St. Joseph to Kansas City to Chicago, to Newark, New Jersey, and back flying passengers, and it was the military – I think they called 'em military air transport command – flying goods, military goods, and passengers. Then, in December of '44, I was – had orders to again report to – again to Nashville, Tennessee, coincidentally, and there to get an overseas assignment.
- Mark: Now, when I talk to bomber pilots, they went over as a group. When you went overseas, did you go over with the plane you were going to be flying? Did you go over with the crew and train with these guys?
- Remington: I took an airplane over – I remember the plane. It had numbers of 9686, and that plane I was asked to take to either Indochina or Burma, and it was unclear what the destination was going to be, but it was at least going to be in the – and it turned out to be Burma. And so, I stayed with that airplane for the trip over there, and then once there, flew any plane that was available at the time to fly.
- Mark: I see, so there was no crew? You didn't have a lady painted on the front of the airplane or any of these kinds of things?
- Remington: No, a really odd situation when I got to Nashville and was given the airplane, and I did have a crew assigned – a co-pilot named Tom Hutchison, radio operator, a navigator, and actually two passengers – two other pilots that needed a ride overseas and didn't have an airplane – and I was a little bit chagrined when the co-pilot and the navigator and radio operator asked, as we went to the airplane to throw our gear in there, whether they could go in and look around. And I said "What do you want to do that for?" And they said "I've never been in one of these planes before." So that – with the exception of myself as the pilot – no member of the crew had ever been in a C-47, so it was hardly what you'd call an impressive, well-trained crew.
- Mark: A well-oiled machine?
- Remington: It was not a well-oiled machine.
- Mark: Out of curiosity, what was your route? Did you fly through Brazil?

Remington: Through Brazil. We flew from Nashville to West Palm Beach, Florida, where there was some work done on the airplane – some modification, and put in the fuselage gas tanks, extra gas tanks in the fuselage. Then flew to Miami, a very short flight, obviously. There, stayed a very short period of time, a matter of hours, then flew to Puerto Rico. The interesting experience, going back to accidents, on the way to Puerto Rico we were switching on the fuselage gas tanks only to find the engine stopped. Switched to the other tank, the engine stopped. Asked the radio operator to go back and look in the tanks, and he reported there wasn't anything in the tanks. They put the tanks in, but no gas in, so fortunately the trip to Puerto Rico wasn't so long that we ran out of gas. We were a little low in the process, but it was good weather and we got to Puerto Rico. Then went to Trinidad, then Belém, Brazil. And then Natal, which sticks out toward Africa. And from Natal to Ascension Island, which was the longest over water trip. I think the Natal to Ascension was longer than Ascension to Accra. I'm not positive about that, but I'm fairly sure. And landed on Ascension Island – took off and again the question of accidents from Ascension Island the next day going to Accra, and very early in the morning, the sun coming up out of the east, you tended to get very sleepy, and the young co-pilot I had, Hutchison, and I said "You ought to do a little of the work. Why don't you fly for a while?" We had an automatic pilot. But next thing I realized, I looked at the clock and thirty minutes had gone by. I looked at the altimeter, and we'd gained about 5,000 feet. And I looked over and Hutchison was asleep. We were both asleep for about thirty minutes, fortunately going up and not going down. We'd been very close to the ocean. Then got to Accra and the most notable fact of that was the plane had been loaded in Nashville with Chesterfield cigarettes donated by the Lions Club of Louisville, Kentucky, and we must have had thousands of packages of Chesterfields. Everybody, of course, in the military smoked with almost no exceptions. And in Accra, somebody stole all the cigarettes.

Mark: All of 'em?

Remington: All of them, yeah. [laughing] I don't know where they went to this day. They just disappeared, and they were commandeered by somebody of high rank or low rank or military or non-military – no way of knowing. And then from Accra went across to central Africa – community I've forgot the name of now, but the dominant factor which can be replicated today were the what seemed like thousands of children all begging – all these poor, poverty stricken area – from there to Khartoun, and again, in terms of the question as to whether there were any close calls, landed in Khartoun at night, and as turned on to the final approach, the lights went out, the radio went off, and all the electrical equipment in the airplane ceased. And fortunately, as I said, I'd had enough experience in landing enough time then in that landing in the dark without the aid of lights was not a particular problem. But as I got on the ground I said, "Did anybody know that somebody turned off the generator?" The navigator, a young guy – it was his first flight – said "Yeah, he did." And I said, "Why'd you do that?" And he said, "Well they taught us in navigator school that when you got on the ground to turn off the generator." I said, "Did they teach you whether to turn it back on?" He said, "I don't remember." So, that was the problem and that was easily resolved by giving him the other half of the lecture – that is, turn it off, but then turn it back on again. Then from Khartoun went over to Aiden. There the big interesting fact was the heat, which was well over 100 degrees, and they warned that if you think you have a fever for any reason, medically, you've gotta put a thermometer in ice in order to get your temperature because the thermometer registered well over 100 degrees. And there was also concern, justifiably or not, with if you're forced down in that area, in the tribal areas, never eat with your left hand, because

that was used for other purposes in the area and would be viewed as highly antisocial contact that require. But fortunately didn't get to test that out, and didn't have to do that. And then on to Karachi, India, then to Agra, where there was more work done on the airplane – a modification type of the radio equipment – and there got the chance to see the Taj Mahal. We were there for about a week while the plane was being worked on, so that was a kind of memorable experience because of the – oh, nature of India and particularly the Taj Mahal, which is one of the world's great architectural masterpieces. Then to Calcutta – a base called **Barakpoo**. And then up to the Assam Valley, which is now, I think, Bangladesh, though I'm not entirely clear where those lines are drawn. But up, very close to Ledo, which is where the start of the Ledo Road – a field called Moenberry. And there – we still had the same airplane – delivered it to Moenberry, and got there the next day. We were ordered to go to the dispensary to get black plague shots because in Burma – not sure about China – but in Burma there was apparently some concern about the black plague. And at that time the Merrill Marauders, which was the U.S. general's name, and the Chinese 5th Army were moving down Burma against – making progress against the Japanese at that time. And that night got the orders to take a plane into a place where I was subsequently stationed for the year – Myitkyina [he pronounced it "Mishinaw"]. It's hard to – that's the way we pronounced it. Whether the Burmese pronounce it that way, I'm not sure. And it's spelled M-y-t-y-k-i-n-a – something like that [actually spelled Myitkyina]. And it's in northern Burma, way up in the mountains. And one of the questions here is the people. They all left. They all left with the Japanese. There was a great deal of ethnic division. This week's paper indicated that the Koreans, which were one of the ethnic groups, suffered a military loss. And there were the Kachins, who were, I think, the longtime enemy of the Koreans, so that there was a great deal of ethnic strife. But the consequence was that in this very remote, way up north area of Burma, there were no – what we call of the native population left. They had all gone into the hills and gone south with the Japanese. In India, the contrary was true. In Calcutta, there was obviously a great deal of relationship, and in China the result was different. There was obviously a great deal of contact with the Chinese. But in Burma, that was not the case.

Mark: The American base was pretty much it for habitation?

Remington: Totally it. There was nothing else. A lot of animals – lions and elephants, and things, but no people.

Mark: I see. And so you were there for almost a year. That was your base camp.

Remington: That was base.

Mark: And you flew how often? Once you got set up –

Remington: We were on rotation, and we flew whenever our time came up, which seemed like it was most often just after you'd went to bed at night. Having to decide whether to stay up and not get called or to go to bed and get called, and so we were on a rotation basis. And whenever a plane – flying mostly gasoline in large, I believe 60 gallon, or larger drums that were put on the airplane and tied down, and we would deliver those to – largely to Kung-Ming, China.

Mark: Kung-Ming, China?

- Remington: And the Myitkyina was the end of the pipeline, so we – Myitkyina had adequate gasoline supplies, but there was no way of getting those to China other than to fly them over the hump.
- Mark: I see.
- Remington: And most, but not all, by any means, of the cargo was gasoline. And the event that there wasn't anything else, we took gasoline over. There were other situations – we also took supplies for the engineers who were building the Burma road, which was, by that time, construction was east of Burma, going through China on its way to Kung-Ming, and brought dynamite and bridge supplies and flew in. And the value of the C-47 unlike the 54 or 46 was we could go into very small grass strips. For example, there is a community, Ten-Chung, which the jade – said to be the jade center of the world – and had a very small, grass runway that would look like runways in small, Northern Wisconsin communities, which is grass and no facilities of any kind. And the C-47 was a particularly good airplane to go into very tight landing situations. So we – the assignment of that kind of duty was all given to us. We also flew the Chinese 5th Army, which, after the one point in the Burmese campaign were to go back to China, and in order to do that, they built stables in the back of the airplane and we would carry two mules and four Chinese in the plane. Unfortunately, as we took off and it got a little cold, they would start a fire in the straw, and stuff, which would – obviously wasn't a comfortable thing to do, but if we were able – we had to, to get over the Himalayas – to go to a high altitude. The lack of oxygen would put the fire out, and also unfortunately, would put the Chinese out. I figure that must have been the time of our national problem with the – with Chinese. If I had been the Chinese, I would have taken umbrage to that. We had parachutes, they didn't. But it was sort of equalized because they had guns and, although we did, they were much more adept with their guns than we were, so.
- Mark: They had bigger ones, too.
- Remington: They had bigger ones, and they were between us and the door. So it was sort of a standoff. We spent a lot of time taking the mules over, and heard before I left there that the Chinese ate 'em all, so it was not a great contribution to the war effort, I don't think.
- Mark: Was there tension between the nationalist Chinese and the Americans? What I'm eventually gonna be getting at is there was, of course, a civil war going on in China, as well as against the Japanese. And how much knowledge of that did you have, and did it affect what you were doing at all?
- Remington: Well, we certainly had knowledge of it as the war in Japan ended, because whereas we had been issued only .45 revolvers which we carried when we flew, there was no particular interest in whether you – they were carried routinely, but I can't remember whether the radio operators were issued one, or if they did whether they carried them or not. We didn't have navigators, we used radio equipment. But once the war ended, I was still in Burma China. Everybody in the crew was issued rifles – automatic weapons. And the reason was very clear, that there was an assumption that the Chinese particular – by that time I was flying, and others were flying, into North Vietnam – and there was not very far into Vietnam because that was again Japanese – but in that area, and that was apparently a center of strength of the Communist faction, and the

assumption was that there would be an effort on their part to take over the equipment that was there – airplanes and others. And that never materialized. At least, it never materialized in my experience. So that was apparent then. Earlier on, it was apparent that there was a fight going on between Stillwell and Shanghai Shack, and that didn't debate too much. That was well known, but it didn't impact on daily life at all.

Mark: Did you have any particular views of the Chinese soldiers? Did they seem professional, for example? Did they seem they would be effective fighters? Was it a draftee, rag-tag army, or did they have high morale? Anything you might have personally noticed?

Remington: At that time, one of the characteristics of the Chinese population – and one has to be careful in stereotyping people, but it was very prevalent and I'm sure not universal – but there was a great deal of reliance on drugs. I say that because one of the major problems we had when we landed in China, which we never had in India, was the morphine in the first aid kit which we carried on our arm. And more than one person, and myself on one occasion, would be with the kit on our arm, and in the place, having something to eat on the field – not off post, but on the field – would find to our chagrin, and there was a subject of discipline, that somebody had sliced open the thing and got the morphine out when it was right on your arm. Cigarettes were highly desirable in China. You could barter. They were not particularly of interest in India – radical difference in that population. Now, if somebody says “How did it affect the fighting population?” I couldn't translate that very effectively, and don't mean to suggest that it necessarily did, although I think it probably did. The reputation that the Chinese had was – soldiers – that they were not at all adverse to using methods if they were able to against the enemy that one would hardly think of as civilized, and it was in that sense, a war that was not fought, if any wars are, at a particularly high level of professional responsibility. And that undoubtedly was true – well, I say undoubtedly true – I don't know. It was true to that extent that information is coming out of the Japanese and their handling of Chinese, Korean not only women, but the population, so there was a great deal of feeling, extremely strong feeling, that parallels the kind of thing going on in Eastern Asia now. The Palestinian and – you were aware that you were in a situation of tremendous antagonism between the Chinese population and the Japanese.

Mark: Now, speaking of the Japanese – did you get near the Japanese at all? Like pot shots in the jungle, or any type of thing?

Remington: No, we were them, but the – the American P-51 groups in China – we were bringing primarily the gasoline – had pretty much gotten control of the skies, and so the biggest problem – there was some of that, but that was – the biggest problem was weather – icing, in particular, and planes lost in the weather. Much more the obstacle than were the Japanese at this particular time. No, they weren't far away, and you could fly over there and see them and there was some activity, but not a great deal. They were – I'm not sure how one would describe it – but they were in that theater probably like the Americans – not giving high emphasis to the Japanese – they were much more focused on the islands of the South Pacific. And they were obviously suffering losses in the Chinese, Burma, India area, and I think were probably either incapable or unwilling to give the resources to do much about it.

Mark: So it seemed that your biggest enemy was weather. I do understand that flying “the hump” was one of the difficult tasks. Perhaps you can elucidate a little bit more about what is particularly difficult about flying over the Himalayas.

Remington: Well it was almost always instrument flying so that we couldn’t get above – we could get above the mountains, but we couldn’t get above the weather because the mountains were in the 20,000 foot range, and the height that a loaded C-47, even with boosters, could get to was probably 22, 23, somewhere, and at that time you’d be just mushing along at a very low airspeed of 110, 120 miles an hour, because it was just sort of hanging there. And loaded – we were going west to east, and the prevailing winds were west to east, and coming back empty, and so, in that sense, the fact that the airspeed was low, the ground speed would be faster going east than coming back west. And so you couldn’t get above – well, you could on occasion if it was real good weather – you couldn’t get above the weather, you were in it all the time. And this was pre-radar days. You couldn’t tell where you were, and the turbulence was –

[tape cuts out]

- a storm at 23,000 feet, put the wheels down, put the flaps down, take all the power off, and have the plane go up to about 40,000 feet just by the thermal currents. And to the extent that we were risking in getting caught in what they now call a wind sheer – it flipped over, that was a very serious problem, although fortunately it didn’t occur very frequently. But the amount of turbulence – it was very great – and, as I say, you were flying on instruments all the time and the traffic in China was fairly heavy. One of the questions here was “Where were you when the Japanese surrendered?” and the answer is I was at about 20,000 feet above Liu-Lang, China holding in a pattern that probably took two hours to get down, and in fairly violent weather, so that not only did you have to fly through it but the traffic was such. And the – western China – even though Kung-Ming is something like Denver – you get out of the mountains and then you’re in this high plain. Some of the other fields – Chan-Yi – had a good friend killed there – ran into a mountain. And so the terrain was difficult in the sense that you needed to be careful while on instruments that you were at the right altitude, and things were not a lot more primitive than they are now. These ground detectors, or wind shear, or radar were unknown – it was just flying blind. And the real problem, which still exists – receiving a lot of publicity – is icing, which was quite routine, and you could hear, and the side of the plane would be dented from ice coming off the propellers. We had isopropyl, I think it was, alcohol that worked off the propellers, and you could hear – sounded like a machine gun going most of the time with ice coming off and hitting the side of the plane – and we had the rubber boot on the front of the wing, which was – the C-47 was a very air-worthy plane. The 46’s got in a lot more trouble, and a lot of those were lost. Curtiss Engine, and it was a bigger airplane with more difficult flight characteristics and did not operate nearly as well in icing, and so 47 was better. But icing was a serious, serious problem.

Mark: Was there a seasonal difference? I’m not sure how far north the monsoon goes in South Asia there.

Remington: It goes well up into this area.

Mark: Was the time of year dependent on how well traffic was going?

- Remington: Yeah, you tended to get the most weather in the monsoon areas, which started, as I recall, in March or so and went through the summer and into the fall, and I think probably less weather in the winter – what we could call winter. Not very cold there, but – the top of the mountains, of course, covered with snow, but otherwise the valleys were fairly tropical.
- Mark: And you mentioned there were a few casualties – people who crashed, and that sort of thing. How frequently did that occur in where you came from? How often did someone not come back?
- Remington: I don't know. I tended to see these – they weren't publicized. Particularly, you tend to see 'em when you knew the person. We were a relatively small unit at Myitkyina, and you knew most of the people. You know, I would guess, certainly in terms of numbers, it would be a relatively small percentage – maybe 5 to 10 per – well, 5 percent. Ten would be, I think, too high. But a significant number of people that – whether it was pilot error, it's sort of like trying to assess some of these accidents that are occurring currently with some of the commuter airlines in particular. Whether it's pilot error, whether it's icing, whether it's the design of the airplane, whether it's whatever it is. Who knows? In those days, it's amazing that there wasn't more pilot error than there was. The kind of training and equipment that people – crews have now are flying are so superior to what was then. All we had was radio compass, and no other navigation equipment. And I had a situation, for example, where, relying on the co-pilot flying – and I don't need to fault him, it could have happened to anyone – we did a instrument letdown in weather, and as he was lining up for what he thought – I thought, not having paid much attention – was the runway. All the lights went out. It turned out we were over a Chinese city that was some 40 miles east of Burma, and had let down through the clouds on a false signal of some kind that got us down into this valley, but with the mountains all around it going up into the clouds. Now, that was an error, a failure to pay close attention, but that wasn't the only time that that happened. Tendency with that radio compass is to get false readings, and you tend to forget - more experienced in doing this, to get a little careless. Time goes on and not figuring it's going to happen this time, and so the cost of that was significant. There were lots of planes lost, I think. I've seen some of the tapes of the China-Burma-India thing, and some of those statistics there, but they lost a significant number of airplanes.
- Mark: If we could talk about the base camp there in Burma, for a little bit – what did you do for fun, stuck out in the jungle? How'd you occupy your time?
- Remington: Well, one of the characteristics of the flying, which I assume is not replicated today, and in retrospect don't understand it, is the first flight I took – I mentioned this young co-pilot, Tom Hutchison, who came out of western Pennsylvania and didn't smoke and didn't drink and I don't think probably ever had a date – he was only 18 years old, 19, maybe, and we had – the first time we flew into Burma at night and to Myitkyina that had just been taken from the Japanese and did not have a paved runway. It had a runway that was gravel, rock – bulldozers had put together – and came back about 4 o'clock in the morning, and even though that's relatively warm climate in northeast India, it tends to be cold, you're tired, and we had flight jackets on. And I noticed Hutchison had his jacket off and was rolling up his sleeve, and I thought it was kind of odd. It didn't seem to me – it seemed to be kind of cold – and I thought he must be having a hot flash of some kind, I didn't know what – because when we were told when we checked in that “here's

your shot slips, and go down to the dispensary.” Well it turned out Hutchison thought he was going to get another black plague shot or something – shot slips – it sounded like since that previous afternoon we had to go to the dispensary and gave us a black plague shot. So we go there and there was a sergeant behind the – fast asleep – and woke him up and he said, you know, “Give me your canteen,” cups, big, you know, metal cups, and he grabbed a bottle of old Overholt and poured a – how much, I don’t know.

Mark: [unintelligible] Overholt? Whiskey?

Remington: Yeah. Rye whiskey.

Mark: Hmm.

Remington: Into the can. And I did not want to let on my ignorance – I’d heard something about it, but I wasn’t sure so I just sort of – well, before I noticed, Hutchison, who had never had a drink in his life, drank what must have been about six ounces of whiskey straight, and turned red first, and then purple. I thought, might be gonna die. I said to him, you know, “What in the world did you do that for?” He said, “Well, this afternoon, we went and they gave us a shot in the arm. I thought this was something you took for – prevent disease!” Well – [laughing] prevent disease – I don’t know what it was for, but, people tended then as you got more sophisticated – so that happened every time you flew. And people tended as you got more sophisticated, to save up these slips that [laughs] – [unintelligible – “there was no end?”] So, there was what I would think one would have to say, a fair amount of drinking. Obviously not something that one would either recommend, either healthwise. Probably, although this was dispensed out of the medical facilities were the ones that dispensed this stuff. I don’t gather why they did that. And you wouldn’t recommend it in terms of going to fly, because there was no control over whether this was – now you have airline pilots and great to do if they’re within 24 hours seen in a bar having a drink, and those days that was obviously not a concern. So, there was a fair amount of drinking going on, to the extent that that’s recreation. The dominant fact was outdoor movies. The military had movies and –

Mark: And now are these documentaries that are now on cable TV? Or did you get feature films, or?

Remington: They were feature films, I think. No, they were – I think we were off the beaten track. We didn’t get any of the Bob Hope or any of those kinds of things, and had no U.S.O. shows. And the only other thing to do – there was the Irrawaddy River that ran right through where we were. We lived in tents. It was totally tent everything. I don’t think there were any, other than the – at the flight line – I don’t think there were any permanent structures. They were all tents, including the mess halls. And we would, in order to – had rations, I guess through the canteen of beer. I don’t mean to over-emphasize the drinking, although that was about all the – movies and drinking were about all that there was in northern Burma. We had a problem of keeping the beer – getting the beer cold, because it was hot. And these people would dig a hole in the ground in the tent, and put a burlap thing over, wet, and then the evaporation would cool the beer. The only trouble is it was very attractive to snakes, cobras in particular, and you had to be very careful in reaching for a beer. And so, along with the other three people and I deciding to avoid that problem to the extent that we could. We’d go out from – in India, I guess one of us flew down to India for some reason,

bought a mongoose and kept the mongoose in the tent, which is the enemy of the cobra. So, we had better protection against that. But there were a fair amount of snakes, and you've got pilots shooting their .45s at the snakes, which was more dangerous than anything around because they couldn't hit the side of a barn with a .45, and let alone hit the snake, but it was amazing that they didn't get a number of people with people running around trying to shoot these snakes that were fairly common. But for people who hunted, and all of us did to some extent, there was a fair amount of hunting. There was a big game area you could see as you were flying in – herds of elephants, and I don't know they hunted elephants. There were a range of cats and reptiles and –

Mark: It sounds like that might have been fairly dangerous in a place like Burma. No casualties taken on the –

Remington: The hunting?

Mark: - on the hunting front?

Remington: Uh, I don't remember any, although I remember deciding, having gone out one night, that I wouldn't do that anymore. I didn't know who was shooting around the place, you know, shooting at what. And so, I think it was pretty dangerous, but the fact is there wasn't much to do.

Mark: There's a term that they use in the South Pacific that was called "rock happy." You ever hear that term? You go sitting on an island with nothing to do and you kind of go bonkers. Did you have any psycho types? Any psychological problems, perhaps, that would manifest themselves in an isolated situation?

Remington: Uh, yeah, it might have been more true of the kind of permanent party that was there. The thing about flying is you were, you know, in China, and it was somewhat different. And although it wasn't different in the sense of very interesting – meals for example in China, and we had many, were always eggs and brown bread. That's it. Period. Nothing else, and in the sense – so it wasn't exotic. Although Calcutta, if you got there, that was still the aftermath of British colonial rule, and you had this tremendous disparity between people being born and dying on the street of Calcutta. And we went through, and we had the privileges – we were there, which was mostly at war's end of going to this swimming area, which somehow we were entitled to buy membership of, and it went from this poverty and despair into elegance. And a walled pool with tables where you were served tea and gin, and whatever you wanted. On one occasion went to the Victoria Country Club – *fancy* golf course where we were getting privileged to play on. Did that once, but. So there was in India, this. But Burma was, if you got down to Rangoon, I'm sure it would be different, but we were in northern Burma would be, oh, just nothing there at all. And western China, I understand from friends who have gone to Kung-Ming recently that Kung-Ming is a large city and some things there, but we never got downtown. I don't know why. Usually we had a relatively limited turnaround time, and that was probably the main reason, but secondly, I don't think there was much there at the time. It was a western kind of frontier area where there wasn't – but the exception was Calcutta. That was because the British tradition there – if you got into that, you were into situations more elegant than most of us had ever experienced in this county.

Mark: Now, you were married at this time.

Remington: Correct.

Mark: Did you manage to stay in contact with folks back home? Your wife and your family?

Remington: Oh yeah. Sure.

Mark: Letters, and –

Remington: Letters, yeah. Mm-hmm. Yep.

Mark: Did mail come frequently? Was it –

Remington: Yeah, I don't think –

Mark: [unintelligible] Like, if you watch *M*A*S*H*, for example –

Remington: Yeah –

Mark: - I hate to bring in these culture analogies, but the mail call is always a very important thing.

Remington: Mm-hmm. No. Yeah, I'm sure it was. There was mail call, and it was a lot like what it looks like in *M*A*S*H*, you know, with the tents around, and, yeah, that worked as well as anything can with frequent letters back and forth. I had a son that was born in June of 1945, and my oldest son, who will be 50 this year, so, decades go by. And at that time, I was actually at a – when he was born I was actually at a fancy – they had a rest area in a place called Chalong India, which again was British, and we were given a week at some juncture when you amass so many flying hours and went there and it was you'd have to say fancy, elegant – the way it was when the British were much more dominant, in control, than they were when we were there. I had, for example, when I was – after the war was over and we transported people out of Burma back into India and I was then assigned to Calcutta, and then flew people from Calcutta largely to some of the other areas, to Karachi, and then they were picked up and taken further. But when we got back to Calcutta we had, again, tents, but we had a young boy, probably 12, 13 years old, who was assigned – would clean up the tent, do some stuff, and run errands if there were any errands to run, and I remember asking him one time what he thought of various things – Mahatma Gandhi, and the Americans, and the British, and he said “I hate Gandhi the most, the British second, and the Americans third.” So [laughs] –

Mark: Not a happy camper.

Remington: Not a happy camper. Well, it turned out he was – what is now Bangladesh. And obviously that

Mark: Was he a Muslim?

Remington: Yeah, Muslim. And that obviously became – that was news to me, the strength of the feelings. But that was obviously the decline of the British influence, but the signs of that influence and

affluence was still there – that was placed strong was in the hills of northern Siam and very nice hotels with fancy dining rooms and the like. So that was sort of night and day. Myitkyina was as primitive as any place can be, Calcutta and the rest area at Chalong were about as fancy as anything could be.

Mark: So, after the Japanese surrendered, and you've already told me where you were when you learned of that, you arrived back in the states then in December, and you've already touched on actually what you were doing – you were transferred to Calcutta. When did you finally get to come back home? And could you describe coming back?

Remington: Well, I say our responsibility was to fly most people out, and I think by the beginning of December of 1945, we had, I'm sure not everybody, but we had most of the people out of China, and out of Burma, and most, I think, out of eastern India – moving everybody west. The route back was west rather than east, although we were about halfway around the world, and one could have, I suppose, gone the other way, but everything went west. And then once that was done, got assignment to be flown out ourselves, and we were flown to Casablanca by a group that was stationed in the Cairo area, I think, northern Africa. And then picked up a boat in Casablanca and came by boat back to Norfolk, Virginia, Newport News. Arrived there on Christmas Eve. All the crew went home – jumped ship and went home for Christmas, so we sat out in the harbor of Newport News on Christmas Day of 1945. Then the day after, the crew came back and brought the ship in. We unloaded and went to Fort Totten, New York, for some reason – I don't remember why. I don't remember whether we all went there – whether it was something to do with your home address or something. And then I went to Westover Field in Massachusetts and was discharged. And housing, of course, was a terrible problem at the time, and I had the additional misfortune of being sort of caught between in the sense that, as far as upstate New York was concerned, I was from Wisconsin, and as far as Wisconsin was concerned, I was from New York. So what I did was got out of the service in March. Wisconsin had started its semester in January, which it still does. Union College in Skenektedy started in March. They were on a quarter system, so I went there in March. Then in the summertime, my wife's father was the sheriff of Sauk County, and I was talking to him that I had no place to live. And he said he had just evicted somebody from Badger Village, and that there was a vacancy there, why didn't I apply for it. And I did, and we were given a place at Badger Village. And so, like so many other people, the place was full of people returning. I then moved to Badger Village with family, and we spent – I finished my undergraduate degree in January of 1947, law degree in January of 1949.

Mark: I'm interested in the Badger Village. Could you perhaps describe the scene – perhaps describe what it was like living there? Kids running around? What were the accommodations like?

Remington: Well, the accommodations were row houses, and they were quite primitive. There was some variation. The people with money, which very few of us had, although we were not bad off because the rent was extremely low, I think \$19 a month, and we were on the G.I. Bill. But the idea of refurbishing a place was more expensive than most people were – or having a car was more expensive than most people had the capacity to do. And there weren't cars available anyway – production hadn't started – started slowly, and getting them even if you had the capacity – my brother-in-law was a prisoner of war in Japan for years, got the first Ford that, I think in Wisconsin, or at least in the Baraboo area, and that came, you know, some months after

the war was over before production again switched to civilian type of vehicles and other things. So, it was a pot-belly wood stove with iceboxes, and the cooking was a range that was also a wood-burning, coal-burning stove that most people had hot plates. And the fire hazard – the transformer would be blown about every night when the load got high enough, and some people, in the attempt to have hot water, would strap oil burners on the water tank that was in the bathroom, and up there on about more than one occasion, burned a hole through the roof of the row house. And it was a little disconcerting to have the number of fires that were up there, but everybody was in the same position. And they had a community hall, run by the Union as I recall, and 3.2 beer, and recreation basketball leagues, softball leagues. And a lot of kids around, the traditional orange, yellow school bus that transported people to town. And so it was the kind of thing which I think everybody was there would say it was very enjoyable, but wouldn't want to do it over again, [chuckling] you know, if you had the opportunity to repeat that. Most people would, I think, decline that opportunity.

Mark: Now, I assume that's mostly the men who are veterans. There are probably very few, if any, women.

Remington: Yes, very few, if any. I didn't know of any.

Mark: And so, while you guys all went out to school, the wives stayed in the Badger Village. Do you know, second hand of course, what would go on there during the daytime?

Remington: Well, I think there were – you know it was such close living, in the sense that these row houses would have probably five units dovetailed together, and almost everybody – well, everybody was approximately the same age, so they got to be – wives got to be very familiar with a wide variety of acquaintance. And because they had so much in common, including small kids, I think the day was filled with, you know, with not only dealing with the house and the – probably the kids – but with group activities of various kinds. I don't think they were highly formal, but there were a lot of things to do. It's a pretty area – people had gardens in the summertime. And there was some transportation available. In my situation, it was a little bit different because my wife's home was Baraboo, which is, as I say, was very close, and so she had family there – we had family. She had immediate family there, and in the Sauk County area. And her brother who had been a Japanese prisoner, lived at Badger Village also while he was finishing his degree in Agriculture here on campus. So it was a good experience.

Mark: Did the G.I. Bill cover your undergraduate, and then graduate expenses?

[a pause – Remington evidently nods in agreement]

Mark: So financing your education wasn't a problem?

Remington: Right. No.

Mark: Now, you were on campus before, and then after the war –

Remington: Right.

- Mark: - so you would be in a position to comment on how the University changed. And, in fact, having been a professor, perhaps you could describe how relationships between students and teachers, perhaps, may have changed on campus after the war.
- Remington: Yeah. I'm not sure. We were not on campus, of course. We'd get the bus at 6:30 and we let off at about 7:40 on University Avenue, and then would pick the bus up at the Union at 5:00 in the afternoon, and so we were very seldom on campus in the sense of anything outside of the – one might say 7:45 to 4:30 schooltime. The facilities were taxed immensely. I can remember when I was still an undergraduate the library that you need to use was in the basement of Bascom Hall, and you could never get a seat there, you had to sit on the stairs reading books. And the Law Library had just the old wing, and unless you – when you left class – you rushed to the library, you wouldn't get a seat. In other words – there wasn't the Memorial Library, there wasn't Helen White. There was the Historical Library, but for campus that was not a large facility in terms of access to the average student. So the thing that I would suppose - major difference for people who are on campus and want to – and then don't have a place to go, either – either an apartment or a dormitory room – was that there wasn't anyplace. It was partly, I think, the enrollment, though I don't remember the details, but a lot of people returned to the Law School. My memory of that is more distinct. Though, I remember, as I say, in Bascom Hall, where you'd have assignments in courses, going to get the book, which you could use and, as I recall, couldn't take with you, and not finding a seat. Almost never could find a place to sit other than on the stairs, or if the weather permitted, and I'm not sure you could go outside even then. So, the campus facilities were much, much more limited. As far as other than in class or studying, then that was all Badger Village. So, that was out of Madison. And except for the occasional trip into Madison, which practically never occurred, all of the weekend – well we had Saturday morning classes, too. And we all had 7:45 classes, that's a big difference. You can shoot a cannon off on the campus at 7:45 and you wouldn't hit anybody.
- Mark: You won't hit me!
- Remington: [laughs] No, that's a big change. And Saturday classes are practically nonexistent. Law School doesn't have any, whereas we had them until noon on Saturday. Had Friday afternoon classes on Friday. Now, as the then Dean of the Law School predicted, if you lose Saturday classes, you're going to lose Friday afternoon classes, and that's happened. And I think we're going to lose Friday morning classes, and I don't know where it'll end, but the campus work week has shortened considerably for most people – faculty as well as students.
- Mark: And now, the G.I. Bill had other aspects. For example, it had a housing loan program. Once you finished school, did you use G.I. Bill? Or were you able to finance a home on your own?
- Remington: I left Wisconsin and went to Michigan, actually, and lived in Willow Run Village, which was a place that was not as nice as Badger Village. It was similar – it was the village that, whereas Badger Village was the housing for the Badger Ordinance Plant, Willow Village was the housing for the General Motors airplane construction industry. And so I went over there with then a wife and two children in January of 1949, and stayed there until September, and then came back having had an offer to join the faculty, and lived in University houses. And lived there til the

point that our family grew to the point they suggested we ought to leave, and so we did, and moved not too far away, and lived in Shorewood.

Mark: I've got one last area I want to cover –

Remington: OK.

Mark: - reunions and veterans organizations and these kinds of things. After the war, after you'd gone home, did you join any sort of campus groups? I know there were a few out there, and come up later on as you grew older.

Remington: No. Fact of the matter, I was involved, I should say, starting in about 1950, I think. As a matter of fact, I came within – was looking at some records this morning [taking paper out of an envelope] I came within an eyelash of getting caught. I say that because my view was I'd had enough experience with the military, but I came within an eyelash of getting caught in the Korean War, because I had – yeah. I had orders to report for commissioning in the Air National Guard on Sunday, December 10, 1950.

Mark: Now, you were still in the reserves at this point?

Remington: Right. And as I recall, that's the day the Air National Guard was called back to duty.

Mark: Hmm.

Remington: 10th of December. I could be wrong, but I'm –

Mark: I'm not sure, either.

Remington: Well, I got up in the morning, going to Milwaukee to get sworn in pursuant to things, and read front page of the paper they had been called back to duty, so I called, said, they didn't mind I was not coming. Then, shortly thereafter, at the request of the then Dean of the Law School, I transferred from the U.W. Air Force reserve to the Judge Advocate General. I was the only person on the Law faculty that he was desirous that they have a course in military law. And so I spent probably, oh, four or five years, and a couple of those going to Charlottesville, Virginia for two weeks in the summertime. Other times, going to Fort Sheridan here. But I didn't – I wasn't particularly enamored with reserve activities and so I sort of ran out of enthusiasm and got separated from the Judge Advocate General Corps sometime around the mid-1950's. And immediate post-war – World War II – there was some activity around town, but being at Badger Village pretty much precluded getting involved. There were people like Tom Fairchild and Jim Doyle and some others who later acquired political recognition of various kinds. And I had some contact with them, but not very much. Then, for a while, I was talked into joining the Hump Pilots Association, but I never went to one of their meetings. And although there are some people in town who are actively involved in that, and urge getting involved, I've never done that. And then when I got to Iron River, my wife said, "Why didn't I join the Veterans of Foreign Wars and go have fish on Friday nights." [laughs] And I said "I don't think I want to do that. I'm not opposed to doing it, but I don't have a particular interest in it. And, as I say, I just don't feel any

need to do that. I had an interesting experience at my 50th wedding – and I won't carry this out too long – but the wedding anniversary, a friend of mine that I flew with – and, in fact, we were both cadet officers at Maxwell Field, which gave us some privileges – this was in pre-flight – a guy from New York, Howard Holford, who later stayed flying – flew for General Electric and Shell Oil, and in that process bought a beautiful piece of land in Antigua, and now has probably the fanciest resort in the Caribbean on Antigua. So my wife and I took the family, large though it is, down there for a week, and Howard Holford gave us the most elegant suite in the place, on top the hill, a beautiful, beautiful area. And we recounted the old days – the good old days – and he told me he was going for his – I don't know – 40th year in a row to a reunion of the P-51 group that he was with. And I said "Good, well, I hope you have a [chuckling] good time." But I never, and my wife will say, "Don't you wonder where some of your friends are?" And I say, "Yes, I wonder where they are," but I've had no particular contact. But, as I say, it's not out of a negative thing, it's just that life sort of goes on, and mine, you know, moved in directions I've been comfortable with. And I really enjoyed seeing my good friend, Howard Holford, again, but that was sort of coincidental rather than a planned type of activity. And some people, Tom Hutchison, who fell asleep flying a plane across the Atlantic – fortunately we survived – I haven't seen or heard from. It would be interesting to know what he's doing, and whether he's alive, and where he is, but I haven't made any particular effort to do any of that.

Mark: We have a little extra tape left, and I just have a couple small little things that might not apply to you too much. The problems that Vietnam veterans had coming back home and reintegrating themselves back in the society, and some of those problems – psychological problems and views that the civilian population had of them. Did you experience any such thing in your own experience?

Remington: No. As I say, I was comfortable getting out. I was comfortable going in, and even more comfortable getting out, so I didn't have any problems, and I was aided by the Badger Village experience, although I preceded that by a few months in the east at Union College, but I had no difficulty whatsoever.

Mark: You felt no animosity towards civilians, or –

Remington: No.

Mark: - they treated you any differently?

Remington: No, no.

Mark: I see. And having been on campus here during the Vietnam uproar, being a veteran yourself, I would think you wouldn't mind commenting on what you – what sort of things were going through your mind during those years?

Remington: Well, I understood the cause for concern on the part of the people. I had two sons that were in the Vietnam – one in the Navy on a tanker in the area, and my younger son with the Army in Vietnam, although at Cam Rahn Bay, as good a place as there was, I guess, in Vietnam. So, obviously, I had a situation and it was very difficult. And my wife, in particular, when they left –

the younger of the two, in particular – but fortunately they both survived, you know, their experiences, and that didn't turn out to be – but I understood the frustration with the nature of the Vietnam War, and I understand – understood the terrible situation to be in, to have the worst of both worlds. That is, the having to serve – or serving – and at the same time, instead of having people think you were doing something worthwhile, having them think the absolute contrary. And I know the son of mine who volunteered for the draft at age 18, and, you know, had the usual opportunities, I think, to avoid that – graduated from Edgewood High School with a good academic record – had the experience in the army as a private – of not being with, in the three years he was in, with anybody else who had, you know, ever been to college, or ever thought of going to college, or having really any of the advantages which he had had. It was a totally different world. You know, not a bad world, and not a bad learning experience, but a terribly frustrating learning experience. So I had great sympathy for that position. On the other hand, I didn't have sympathy for the disruption of the educational process, for those, including veterans of Vietnam who desired to go to school and put their life together – or back together - and I didn't have as much sympathy for the campus. I thought the target was the wrong target, though, you know, that's arguable, and I know the argument can be made of the math center, and being funded by the Defense Department, and all the arguments can be – but it seemed to me that, except as a way of bringing about social change through high visibility action on college campuses, that that was at least problematic, and some of the individual behavior was problematic. But on the whole, I never took the position that the veteran – you gotta love war – quite the contrary. I don't think there's anything very lovable about war, and the fact that people do all they can to avoid it and think the nation should do all they can – we can – to avoid it is the right thing.

Mark: Is there anything you'd like to add?

Remington: No, it's been interesting. Nice to be here.

Mark: Excellent. Well, thank you for stopping in.

Remington: OK.

Mark: I really appreciate it.

[end of recording]